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ABSTRACT

Teachers adapt and supplement a basic text to make up for inadequacies and to enrich, reinforce, and emphasize. One authority suggests these steps for adapting materials: assess and evaluate student needs and survey existing materials, decide what should be deleted or added, compile a list of potential uses of language and supply the means by which students can move from mastery of the existing materials to the listed uses. Assessing student needs is a top priority before adapting or supplementing. To adapt existing materials, teachers can cut up a book. This enables the teacher to distribute portions to individual students or reorganize the sequence. Another way to adapt is to change the material to serve other purposes. A set of criteria for creating supplementary materials and activities recommends that the activity should (1) be purposeful and incorporate functional language; (2) provide opportunities to engage in listening, speaking, reading, and writing; (3) be interesting or fun; (4) be applicable to a variety of ability levels; (5) not require much time to put together; and (6) be of minimal cost. (YLB)

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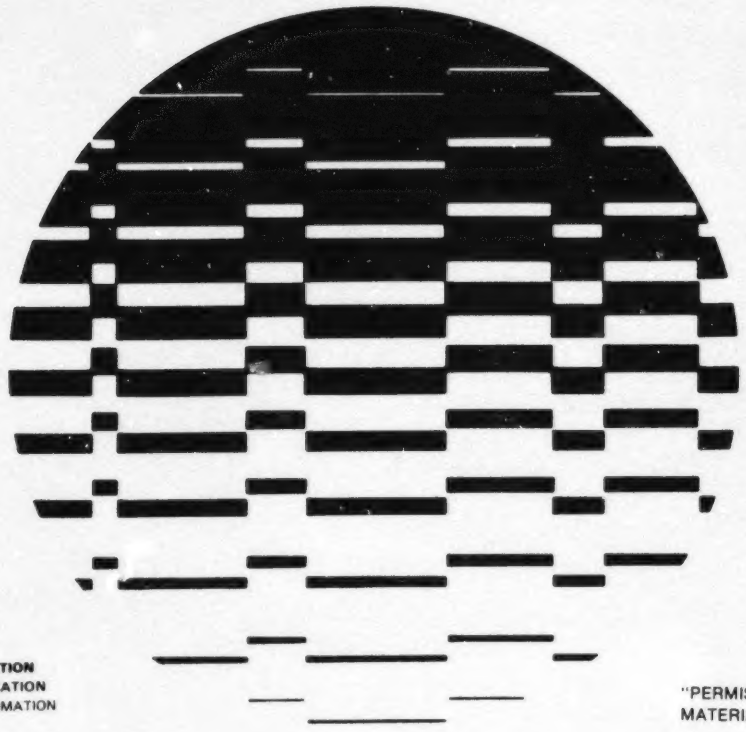

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Is There Life After *New Horizons*?

by Elizabeth A. Watson Minicz

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No one textbook suits us all or all of our students. No one text (affordable, that is) combines activities for listening, pronunciation, reading, grammar, spelling, literacy, handwriting, composition, vocabulary, idioms, games, roleplays, original communication, and survival skills. Neither does any one text meet the requirements of being visually attractive, adult oriented, realistically structured in relation to student needs and abilities, and suitable for multilevel, large group, small group, duet, and individualized instruction. What do we do, especially if we are teaching in a program with a limited budget for materials or one in which students can not legally be required to purchase books? Do we forsake all books and just write our own? Usually not. Instead, we carefully evaluate the available texts and then select the one or two that best meet our criteria for appropriateness and that best correlate with the content of our curriculum.

Having a basic text, no matter its limitations, is a relief. It helps make our teaching easier, and it satisfies our students' cravings for a book. Although the basic text we finally decide to use might be poorly organized, might be structurally focused when we teach in an open enrollment program, might have terrible visuals, or might use unrealistic dialogues, we can still use it. Granted, of course, that we adapt and supplement to make up for the inadequacies as well as to enrich, reinforce, emphasize, and maybe even have some fun, too.

Although adapting and supplementing often intermesh, they

can be defined separately. Adapting means using a text or other materials in a way that is different from what was originally intended. For example, Little Stories for Big People (Gonshack, 1976) can be used to create great strip stories. Columns such as Ask Ann Landers or Dear Abby can provide provocative lessons in American culture. Supplementing, on the other hand, can either be the expanding of an existing lesson or the adding of an unrelated activity to the day's lesson plan.

Comprehensive guidelines for adapting materials have been defined by Stevick (1971), who suggests the following steps:

1. Assess and evaluate student needs and survey existing materials.
2. Decide what should be deleted or added.
3. Compile a list of potential uses of language.
4. Supply the means by which students can move from mastery of the existing materials to the uses listed in step 3.

When adapting means using a published text for inspiration while you are writing lessons, it would also be helpful to keep Stevick's criteria of strength, lightness, and transparency in mind. Materials with strength stir the students to feel they can use, and want to use, what they are studying. Lightness is a measure of the ease of learning, and transparency refers to materials that clearly show their focus and meaning (Knapp, 1978).

Assessing student needs is an obvious top priority before we adapt or supplement. Although many of the new materials on the market focus on survival or coping skills, it is timewasting to teach the language needed for using banking facilities if every-

one in the class already has a savings or checking account. At the same time that we want to integrate meaningful material into our lessons, we want to make certain that such topics directly impinge on the adult world of our readers. Papierski (1979) notes that some teachers begin each new class session by asking students to indicate the survival skills that best relate to their needs or most interest them. We can make our own survival skills checklist by consulting the table of contents of various texts or by keeping an ongoing log of the events that have filled our days. In addition, advanced level students are very happy to share with us their experiences and frustrations in learning English.

When we finally begin to adapt existing materials, there are several ways to approach the task. One way is to cut up a book, putting each chapter or component in a separate folder (Ganzerhoff, 1979). This makes a lot of sense when teachers have only one or two copies of a book. Because most classes are individualized to some extent, the teacher can redistribute the portions of the text that are appropriate for individual learners. The teacher can pick out the best of each book without puzzling the students with random selections of topics. Finally, since redundancy aids learning, the same item can be approached from several different directions (Bodman, 1979).

Reorganizing the sequence in which grammatical structures are presented would be another type of adaptation that is made easier by cutting up the original material. According to Van Syoc (1978), it might be more productive and meaningful for

students to begin instruction by learning modals rather than be verbs. Perhaps teaching tense, number, person, the auxiliary verbs be, have, do, and all questions not formed with a modal should be delayed. Most texts ignore twoword and threeword verb combinations, such as put on or look down on, until advanced levels. Wouldn't it be more realistic to begin teaching them right away?

Another way to adapt is to change the material at hand to serve other purposes. Nursery rhymes, tongue twisters, and short poems can be used for pronunciation exercises that emphasize rhythm and intonation as well as correct articulation. The words to songs of all kinds can be changed (Uve Kind and Caolyn Graham have done many of these lyrical adaptations). Telephone tapes of the kind used by community colleges, social service agencies, and Dial-A-Message can become listening exercises. Students can answer specific questions, summarize, take dictation, learn new vocabulary, etc. Dial-A-Joke tapes are fun to use after students have practiced telling simple jokes and riddles in class and have graduated to more sophisticated types. Even toys that need to be assembled or cereal box "prizes" that need to be put together can provide lesson ideas.

As a complement to Stevick's suggestions for adapting, here is a set of criteria for creating supplementary materials and activities:

1. The activity should be purposeful and incorporate meaningful, functional language.
2. The activity should provide opportunities to engage in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

3. The activity should be interesting or fun.

4. It should be applicable to a variety of ability levels.

5. The activity should not require much time to put together.

6. The cost should be minimal (or better yet, free).

Subscribing to professional journals and newsletters, attending conferences and workshops, and just talking to other teachers will provide us with innumerable supplemental activities.

Let me share an idea of my own that fits the above criteria for supplementing. It was developed for multilevel classes and uses group and individualized instruction. This lesson can be done independently or as a followup to a lesson that teaches conditional statements such as, "If I could go on vacation, I'd go to_____." or "I wish I could go to_____. The song, "Mind Travelers" on the Sunday Afternoons (Kingsbury & O'Shea, 1974) tape also applies.

Preparation: First, save the travel section of the Sunday paper for several weeks. Clip out ads for vacations or trips that have coupons to fill out to send for information. Obtain a map of the world. Ask each student to bring an envelope and a first-class postage stamp to school. Have some extras on hand for those who forget.

First Activity: Pass out coupons and ads to everyone. Ask each student where he or she is going. Ask students to locate the spot on the map. Next have students fill out the coupons and address the envelopes. Collect the envelopes to mail. Ask the students to bring the travel brochures to class when they receive

them.

Second Activity: Several weeks later (when at least 5-10 brochures have been received), divide the class into small groups of four or five. Each group must read the literature and decide the following:

1. When they are going (specific date of departure).
2. How long they will be gone.
3. Who will be going (spouses, children)?
4. How much money will each person need (include cost of trip and spending money)?
5. What will they do on the trip?

Third Activity: Reassemble the class. Select a group to be questioned. The rest of the class asks the members of this group about their travel plans. The student responses have always been hilarious and spontaneous!

Adapting and supplementing provide unlimited opportunities for teachers to be creative. They let us work those "hot ideas" that we think of on the way to class into our lessons. We never need to do the same thing twice, but might if we were strictly bound to a text. We can experiment and refine, delete and add in an infinite number of ways. There should be no reason for teachers or students to be bored. There really is life beyond the textbook!

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About the Author

Elizabeth A. Watson Minicz served as an E.S.L. instructor for Community High School District 88 in Villa Park for 8 years. She has presented workshops for Illinois TESOL/BE, IACEA, and for the E.S.L. Service Center. She now lives in Washington, D.C. with her family.